

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 090700Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 891

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 4673

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, MY, US, JA

SUBJ: AFTERMATH OF KUALA LUMPUR INCIDENT: JAPANESE-MALAYSIAN
RELATIONS

SUMMARY: JAPANESE AMBASSADOR IS FEELING PERSONALLY BRUISED BY
TERRORIST INCIDENT AND THERE HAS BEEN DAMAGE TO JAPANESE-MALAYSIAN
RELATIONS.

OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH THE MALAYSIANS HAVE NOT BEEN
DAMAGED, AND THERE ARE SOME PLUSES IN THIS AFFAIR AS
REGARDS MALAYSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM
AND PERHAPS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH A NUMBER OF
THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

1. JAPANESE AMBASSADOR SUMA CAME TO SEE ME EARLY EVENING OF
FRIDAY, AUG 8. PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT OBSTENSIBLY WAS
TO REPORT THAT PRIME MINISTER RAZAK HAD CALLED HIM
IN EARLIER IN AFTERNOON TO THANK HIM FOR THE EFFORTS OF
THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT. (MALAYSIAN PRESS HAS THIS AS A
CALL BY SUMA TO THANK GOM.) ACCORDING TO SUMA, RAZAK
OBLIQUELY CRITICIZED GOJ BY REFERRING TO THE MANY DELAYS
ON THURSDAY, AND PARTICULARLY TO GOJ INSISTENCE ON FORMAL
CLEARANCE FROM TRIPOLI EVEN AFTER GHAZALI-AL OBEIDI PHONE
CALL. SUMA THEN WENT TO SOME LENGTH TO EXPLAIN YET AGAIN
TO ME DIFFICULTIES GOJ HAD FACED, AND TO EMPHASIZE THERE
HAD BEEN NO DELIBERATE STALLING.

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2. I TOLD SUMA THAT I FULLY APPRECIATED THE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT POSITION IN WHICH BOTH HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN PLACED. I RECOGNIZED THAT VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE TOUGH DECISIONS HAD TO BE MADE BY THE GOJ, THE TOUGHEST BEING THE INITIAL AGONIZING ONE WHETHER TO ACCEDE TO THE TERRORISTS DEMANDS. I ADDED THAT I ADMIRER HIM AND HIS STAFF FOR THE TIRELESS AND DIGNIFIED WAY THEY HAD CARRIED OUT THEIR DUTIES, AND THAT HE COULD BE SURE THAT ALL OF HIS DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES HAD THE HIGHEST RESPECT FOR HIM.

3. SUMA BRIGHTENED CONSIDERABLY AND EVEN MANAGED A SMILE WHEN I WALKED HIM TO THE ELEVATOR (MOST READERS WILL BY NOW REALIZE JAPANESE EMBASSY IS PLACED FOUR FLOORS UNDER OURS). HE IS, HOWEVER, FEELING BRUISED BY THE INCIDENT. GHAZALI GAVE HIM SOME PRETTY ROUGH TREATMENT, AND IN FACT, SUMA WAS AN AWKWARD AND INEPT NEGOTIATOR. I ADMIRER HIS COURAGE, BUT NOT HIS DIPLOMATIC SKILLS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, JAPANESE-MALAYSIAN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN DAMAGED. RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, BOTH GOM AND MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SAW GOJ AS EVASIVE AND DELAYING. THIS, COUPLED WITH FACT TERRORISTS WERE JAPANESE, HAS REAROUSER LATENT ANTI-JAPANESE FEELING WHICH IN ANY CASE IS NEVER FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE HERE. CLASSIC EXPRESSION OF THIS WAS POLICE OFFICIAL'S REMARK TO ME: "THEY OVERRAN OUR WHOLE COUNTRY IN EIGHTEEN DAYS AND NOW THEY CAN'T EVEN GET A PLANE IN THE AIR."

4. THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF POLICE, CERTAINLY, AND GHAZALI, PROBABLY, BELIEVE JAPANESE WERE CONTEMPLATING SOME SORT OF OFFENSIVE OPERATION AGAINST THE TERRORISTS. GHAZALI CONFIDED TO ME GOM TOYED WITH SAME IDEA BUT REJECTED IT AT SOME LEVEL (PROBABLY PRIME MINISTER'S) ON GROUNDS THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD LEAVE MALAYSIAN MISSIONS, WHICH WOEFULLY VULNERABLE, OPEN TO RETALIATION.

5. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THIS INCIDENT HAS CHANGED MALAYSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM (AS OPPOSED TO THEIR OWN COMMUNIST INSURGENT PROBLEMS) IN SOME CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS; IT HAS ALSO, WE BELIEVE, CHANGED THEIR PERCEPTION OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH SOME OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES IN SOME IMPORTANT WAYS. WE WILL BE
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ATTEMPTING TO ANALYZE THIS IN COMING WEEKS. IN THE SHORT RUN, I WILL ALSO BE TRYING TO BUCK UP THE MORALE OF OUR JAPANESE COLLEAGUES. ALTHOUGH SUMA DID NOT MENTION IT, AND IN FACT THANKED ME PROFUSELY FOR MY SUPPORT DURING A TRYING PERIOD, JAPANESE EMBASSY STAFF HERE GENERALLY FEELS IT SOMEHOW LET DOWN BY AMERICAN FRIENDS AND A FEW BITTER REMARKS HAVE BEEN MADE TO US. I DO NOT BELIEVE OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIA HAVE BEEN HARMED IN ANY

IMPORTANT WAY. DESPITE OCCASIONAL NEEDLES FROM GHAZALI
AND IGP, THEY AND SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS
(WHO WERE AT SCENE ALMOST ENTIRE TIME) WERE UNDERSTANDING
OF OUR POSITION AND THEY HAVE HAD VERY
COMPLIMENTARY THINGS TO SAY TO ME ABOUT THIS EMBASSY.
THEY ARE ALSO GRATEFUL FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE WE WERE
ABLE TO RENDER.
DILLON

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